

## Is hepatitis B a serious problem?

**Y**es. Each year, thousands of people of all ages get hepatitis B and about 5,000 die of chronic (life-long) liver problems caused by HBV infection. If you have had other types of hepatitis, such as hepatitis A or hepatitis C, you can still get hepatitis B.

## How is HBV spread?

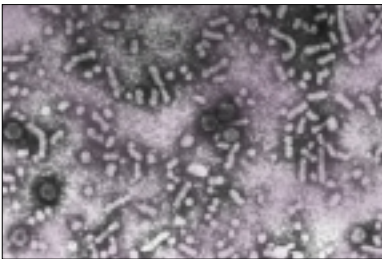
- HBV is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person or by having sex with an infected person.
- A woman who has hepatitis B can spread the virus to her baby during birth.



This man has jaundice, or yellow skin and eyes, which is a symptom of hepatitis.  
Photo by the Immunization Action Coalition

## You CANNOT get HBV from:

- sneezing or coughing
- kissing or hugging
- sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses
- breast feeding
- food or water
- casual contact (such as an office setting)



Hepatitis B

## How do you know if you have hepatitis B?

Only a blood test can tell for sure. See your doctor if you have symptoms of hepatitis (e.g., tiredness, stomach ache, joint pain, yellow skin or eyes), or if you think you have had direct contact with someone who has hepatitis B.

**It is very important that all pregnant women get a blood test for hepatitis B early in their pregnancy, since a woman who has hepatitis B can spread the virus to her baby during birth.**

## How can you protect yourself from getting infected with HBV?

- **Get vaccinated!**  
**Hepatitis B vaccine is safe, effective, and your best protection.**

- **Practice “safer” sex.**

If you are having sex, but not with one steady partner, use latex condoms correctly every time you have sex and get vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Men who have sex with men should be vaccinated against both hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

- **Don’t share anything that might have blood on it.**

Never share anything that might have blood on it, such as a razor or toothbrush.

If you shoot drugs, get help to stop or get into a treatment program. Don’t share needles, syringes, cookers, cottons, water, or rinse cups. Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B.

- **Think about the health risks if you are planning to get a tattoo or body piercing.**

You can get infected if the artist or piercer doesn’t sterilize needles and equipment, use disposable gloves, and wash hands properly.

- **Follow standard precautions.**

If you are a health-care worker, follow standard precautions and handle needles and sharps safely. Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.



## Get hepatitis B vaccine if:

- your sex partner has hepatitis B
- you are a man who has sex with men
- you have had a sexually transmitted disease (e.g. gonorrhea, syphilis)
- you have sex with more than one partner
- you shoot drugs
- you live with someone who has life-long hepatitis B
- you have a job that exposes you to human blood
- you are a kidney dialysis patient
- you live or travel for more than 6 months in countries where hepatitis B is common

**Everyone under 19 years old should get vaccinated against hepatitis B!**

## Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and effective. Millions of people have received the vaccine worldwide since 1982. *You do not need booster shots* after you complete the three-shot vaccine series.

## Should you get a blood test after the three shot vaccine series to be sure that you are protected?

Most people don't need to get their blood tested after getting the vaccine.

You should get a blood test 1 to 2 months after you complete the series if:

- your sex partner has chronic hepatitis B
- your immune system is not working well (i.e., you are on dialysis or you have AIDS)
- you have a job that exposes you to human blood

**Babies born to infected mothers should get their blood tested at 9 to 15 months old to be sure that they are protected.**



Should you get a blood test after being vaccinated?

For more information about Hepatitis B, call **1-888-4-HEP-CDC** or visit our website at **[www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis)**

# Prevent hepatitis B: Get Vaccinated!



Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV) that attacks the liver and can be spread to others.



Department of Health and Human Services

